3.12 AESTHETICS, LIGHT and GLARE

This section describes the visual character of the project site and surrounding area, including viewer groups, views, and existing sources of light and glare.

3.12.1 Affected Environment

The project site is located on rolling terrain near the eastern slope of the West Seattle plateau. The rolling terrain provides opportunities for territorial vistas and panoramas from streets and various residences within the community.

Visual Character and Continuity

Landscape patterns to the north and south of the project site include an urban grid street system dominated by one and two story single-family residences. A steep heavily vegetated bluff borders the community on the east providing a visual buffer to and from development in the valley below. The White Center Neighborhood Park and linear open space form the west edge of the community. The Park and open space include a heavily vegetated drainage area that is lower in elevation; thereby, providing a buffer and visual screening between residences to the east and west.

The existing residences are single-story buildings of simple wood-frame construction with a consistent architectural style. The architectural style reflects standardized construction methods of the World War II era, which lack color, architectural detail, and distinguishing design elements. Corner and strip windows dominate the simple horizontal lines of these residences. Some buildings include a slight variation in the type of siding (board and batten, shiplap, shingle). Although the style is consistent, the buildings lack architectural integrity since they have been extensively remolded over the years.

Individual lawn areas and mature deciduous and evergreen trees contribute to the visual character of the community by defining open spaces, and providing canopies and shade. Mature trees also help to visually distinguish the location of residential clusters and individual residences.

The primary street plan consists of roadways, curbs, and small parking cul-de-sacs that contrast with the traditional urban block and alley configuration of the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, the community lacks streetscape continuity with surrounding neighborhoods since there are few through roadway connections other than 8th Avenue SW. Pole-mounted overhead telephone and electric cables cross streets at various locations and create visual clutter. Existing utilities are prominent streetscape features.

The White Center Heights School site and playground are near the central-south boundary of the site. The school has recently been demolished. The existing community center is north of the former school site. The former school site and community center are in an open area of the site that includes few mature trees. These one and two-story structures are much larger in scale than the surrounding residential buildings and they provide a visual focal point for the community.

Viewer Groups and Views

Primary viewer groups include existing residents, residents adjacent to the project site, motorists and pedestrians using area roadways, and project site visitors. Photographs were taken from various locations to characterize existing views by primary viewer groups. The project site does not include any King County designated scenic viewpoints or protected views.

The visual character of the existing community is represented by views from 7 key viewpoints (See **Figure 3.12-1**). Views from the key viewpoints shown in Figure 3.12.1 are provided in Appendix D of this Draft EIS.

Light and Glare

Outdoor illumination within the project site consist of exterior floodlights on buildings, interior residential lighting, and street lighting. The more noticeable light sources are concentrated in the area of the community center and school, and along arterial streets, (primarily 4th Avenue SW, 8th Avenue SW, and SW Roxbury Street). Lighting levels in the neighborhoods surrounding the project site are lower and consist primarily of yard and house lighting. The visibility of lighting around many of these residences is variable due to the presence of landscaping. Lighting sources within the project site are not prominently distinguishable from sources in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Existing sources of reflective glare are limited to unshielded overhead lighting and vehicle headlights reflecting on building windows and other reflective surfaces. However, reflective glare is not extensive due to the prevailing architectural style of the buildings.

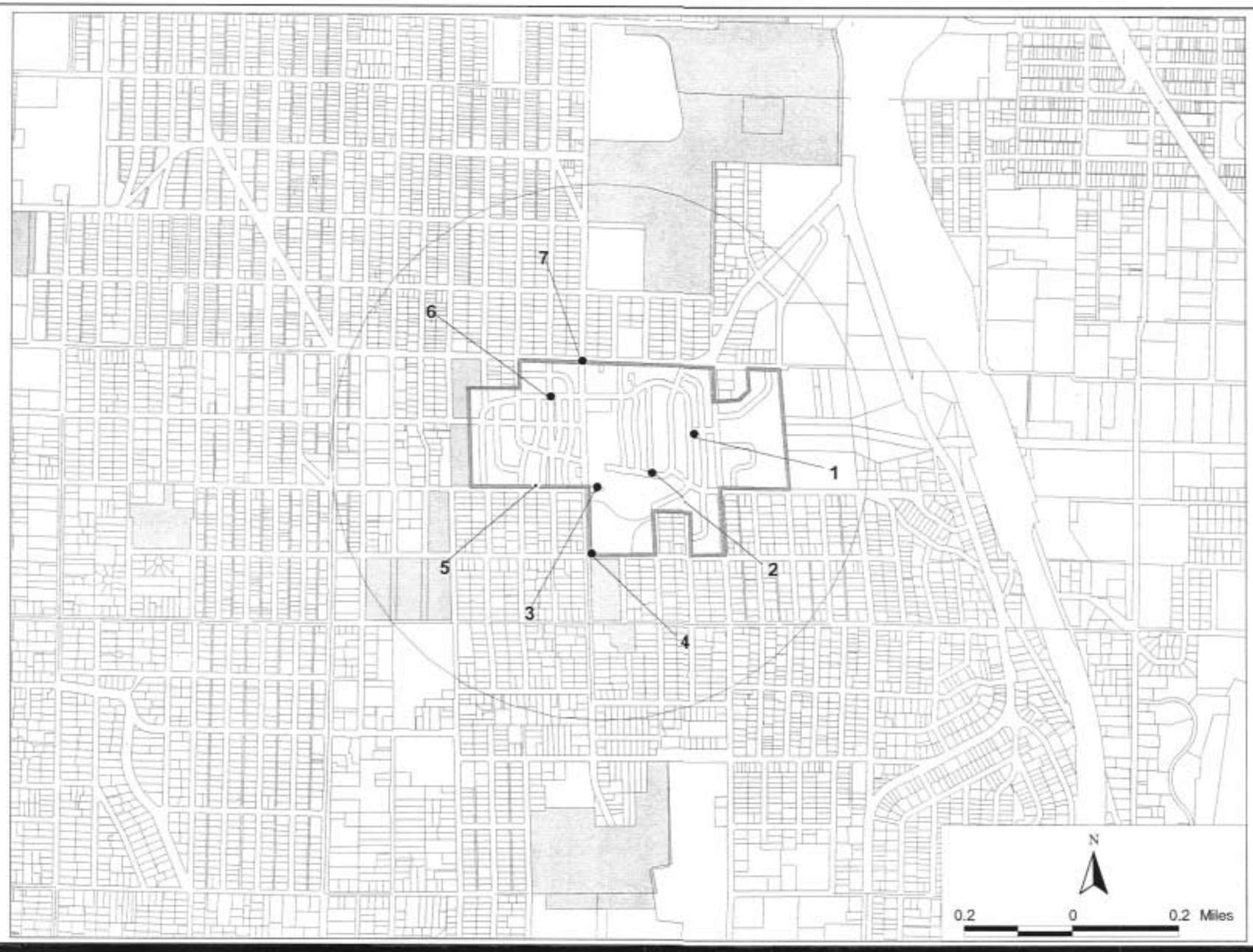

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Figure 3.12-1

Views From Key Viewpoints